SPRING/SUMMER 2008

# visions north

TALKING ABOUT YUKON LAND CLAIMS

## Revitalising a Carving Tradition

Creating a healthy community does not simply mean preventing disease. A healthy community is a group of people with a strong sense of pride in their culture and each other.

The Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN) Carver Training Program hopes to build community health by reinforcing a strong connection to Carcross Tagish culture among CTFN members.

"This is about revitalising a culture," says Justin Ferbey, senior government official of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. "It is about allowing local artists to make a living with their art, and it is about providing a healthy social space where people can congregate and engage in our traditions."

With funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), CTFN's carver training program brings together master carver Keith Wolf-Smarch and six carvers who are members of CTFN. The group is exploring and studying their traditional art by carving a series of Inland Tlingit totem poles that depicts a creation story, beginning with one totem pole each for the wolf and crow moieties, or kinship groups.

Once the wolf and crow are completed the program may continue to carve poles for each of the six clans within the two moieties.

"It's a celebration of culture really, with a healthy influence from Keith Smarch, who is modeling behaviours and traditions consistent with our virtues and values regarding the proper treatment of the wood. The elders blessed the wood and made the first cut," explains Ferbey.

The program is expected to continue in the summer, with the construction of a carving shed in downtown Carcross.

For more information contact: Carcross/Tagish First Nation at (867) 821-4251.

"This is about revitalising a culture. It is about allowing local artists to make a living with their art and, it is about providing a healthy social space where people can congregate and engage in our traditions."

JUSTIN FERBEY, SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL OF THE CARCROSS/TAGISH FIRST NATION

## Studying Northern Food Security

For northern communities such as Old Crow, climate change brings up two main questions: how a warming climate will affect food security, and how to adapt to environmental changes. To ensure their communities are ready for potential changes to food supplies, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council are working with professor Dr. Laurie Chan from the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) to discover how climate change could affect their food security.

The study, *Adaptation Strategies to Effects of Climate Change and Impacts on Diet and Health*, is funded through the International Polar Year Committee and conducted in cooperation with Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN), University of Northern British Columbia, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Teslin Tlingit Council. The scientists have conducted interviews and analyses in Old Crow throughout 2007, and will begin research work in Teslin this spring.

"People here are concerned about changes to our food supply because of climate change and getting prepared for what might come is a big part of this research project," said Shel Graupe, Natural Resources Director for the Vuntut Gwitchin government. "We're happy to be partners in a study that addresses some of our community's biggest concerns," he added.

In the first part of the study, three scientists spent time in Old Crow assessing the Traditional Knowledge Archives for stories of past adaptation strategies, and conducted focus groups to hear from Elders and community members about adaptive strategies that have been passed on orally. They also followed up on a 1995 food frequency study, conducting a small-scale dietary survey. The involvement of Vuntut Gwitchin membership was essential to the success of the project.

"Community participation is crucial in Northern research and it is always a pleasure to work with communities in the Yukon because they are empowered and willing to do research, so it's a research partnership," said Dr. Laurie Chan, Leadership Chair of the UNBC Community Health Sciences Program.

As well as recording information from the people of Old Crow, the researchers used information from wildlife ecologists to gain an understanding of changes to animal populations in the area.

"We hope that we will have a better understanding of the potential impact of bio-quality on the people and then work with the community to come up with a plan. Say there are fewer caribou, can the people eat more moose? Or if some fish species are not so available what are the other sources of protein and mineral nutrients?" said Chan.

The results of the first part of the study will be reported soon to the community of Old Crow.

**For more information contact:** Shel Graupe at Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) (867) 966-3213.

Researchers in Old Crow (L to R) Jennifer Lee, Lands Manager for VGFN; Pam Tobin, Field Research Manager, UNBC; Sonia Wesche, Postdoctoral Fellow, UNBC (Oct. 2007)

Carcross/Tagish First Nation carvings

WHAT'S INSIDE?


Revitalising a Carving Tradition

Studying Northern Food Security

Health Initiatives at the Council of Yukon First Nations

Regional Longitudinal Health Study

Networking to Promote Community Health

Women Connecting for Wellness

Vuntut Gwitchin Student Receives Funding for Medical School

Health Programs Transferred to Self-Governing First Nations


WHAT IS VISIONS NORTH?

Visions North: talking about Yukon land claims is a bi-annual newsletter that raises awareness about land claims and self-government agreements and related issues in Yukon First Nation and non-First Nation communities.

Visions North is produced and distributed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), with the participation of the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN).

# visions north

TALKING ABOUT YUKON LAND CLAIMS

## Revitalising a Carving Tradition

Creating a healthy community does not simply mean preventing disease. A healthy community is a group of people with a strong sense of pride in their culture and each other.

The Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN) Carver Training Program hopes to build community health by reinforcing a strong connection to Carcross Tagish culture among CTFN members.

"This is about revitalising a culture," says Justin Ferbey, senior government official of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. "It is about allowing local artists to make a living with their art, and it is about providing a healthy social space where people can congregate and engage in our traditions."

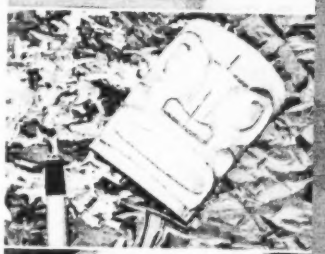
With funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), CTFN's carver training program brings together master carver Keith Wolf-Smarch and six carvers who are members of CTFN. The group is exploring and studying their traditional art by carving a series of inland Tlingit totem poles that depicts a creation story, beginning with one totem pole each for the wolf and crow moieties, or kinship groups.

Once the wolf and crow are completed the program may continue to carve poles for each of the six clans within the two moieties.

"It's a celebration of culture really, with a healthy influence from Keith Smarch, who is modeling behaviours and traditions consistent with our virtues and values regarding the proper treatment of the wood. The elders blessed the wood and made the first cut," explains Ferbey.

The program is expected to continue in the summer, with the construction of a carving shed in downtown Carcross.

For more information contact Carcross/Tagish First Nation at (867) 821-4251.



Carcross/Tagish First Nation carvings

## Studying Northern Food Security

For northern communities such as Old Crow, climate change brings up two main questions: how a warming climate will affect food security, and how to adapt to environmental changes. To ensure their communities are ready for potential changes to food supplies, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council are working with professor Dr. Laurie Chan from the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) to discover how climate change could affect their food security.

The study, *Adaptation Strategies to Effects of Climate Change and Impacts on Diet and Health*, is funded through the International Polar Year Committee and conducted in cooperation with Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN), University of Northern British Columbia, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Teslin Tlingit Council. The scientists have conducted interviews and analyses in Old Crow throughout 2007, and will begin research work in Teslin this spring.

"People here are concerned about changes to our food supply because of climate change and getting prepared for what might come is a big part of this research project," said Shel Graupe, Natural Resources Director for the Vuntut Gwitchin government. "We're happy to be partners in a study that addresses some of our community's biggest concerns," he added.

In the first part of the study, three scientists spent time in Old Crow assessing the Traditional Knowledge Archives for stories of past adaptation strategies, and conducted focus groups to hear from Elders and community members about adaptive strategies that have been passed on orally. They also followed up on a 1995 food frequency study, conducting a small-scale dietary survey. The involvement of Vuntut Gwitchin membership was essential to the success of the project.

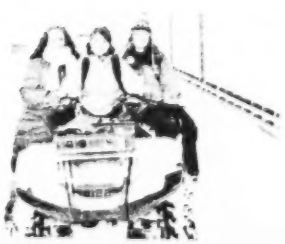
"Community participation is crucial in Northern research and it is always a pleasure to work with communities in the Yukon because they are empowered and willing to do research, so it's a research partnership," said Dr. Laurie Chan, Leadership Chair of the UNBC Community Health Sciences Program.

As well as recording information from the people of Old Crow, the researchers used information from wildlife ecologists to gain an understanding of changes to animal populations in the area.

"We hope that we will have a better understanding of the potential impact of bio-quality on the people and then work with the community to come up with a plan. Say there are fewer caribou, can the people eat more moose? Or if some fish species are not so available what are the other sources of protein and mineral nutrients?" said Chan.

The results of the first part of the study will be reported soon to the community of Old Crow.

**For more information contact:** Shel Graupe at Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN): (867) 966-3213.



Researchers in Old Crow (L to R) Jennifer Lee, Lands Manager for VGFN; Pam Tobin, Field Research Manager, UNBC; Sonia Wesche, Postdoctoral Fellow, UNBC (Oct 2007)

WHAT'S INSIDE?


Revitalising a Carving Tradition

Studying Northern Food Security

Health Initiatives at the Council of Yukon First Nations

Regional Longitudinal Health Study

Networking to Promote Community Health

Women Connecting for Wellness

Vuntut Gwitchin Student Receives Funding for Medical School

Health Programs Transferred to Self-Governing First Nations

2008-05888/
TRAINING POLICY COMMITTEE

The Council of Yukon First Nation's Health and Social Development Department actively works to improve the health and well-being of Yukon First Nations people. Sometimes acting as a coordinator or liaison, sometimes as an advocate – always busy and involved, the department addresses issues of a national, regional or local nature. Where appropriate, it assists Yukon First Nation communities implement and evaluate the delivery of their health and social programs. The department also acts as the secretariat for the Health and Social Development Commission.

The Health and Social Development Commission is a committee of community health and social services directors and Elders. It comes together every two months to discuss major health issues and regional/national initiatives.

The Health and Social Development Department is undertaking a number of exciting initiatives. It is continuing its involvement in the regional longitudinal health survey (see story below), it has established a working group to assess the feasibility of a Yukon First Nations' Health and Wellness Centre; and it is also carrying on its involvement with the national Aboriginal Health Transition Fund to improve integration activities for First Nation citizens in our health care system, to name but a few of its current activities.

**For further information contact:** the Health and Social Development Department at (867) 393-9213.

Health Commissioners en route to meetings at Moosehide (June 2007).

Ownership, control, access and possession are the principles that underlie the Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, a project run by the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) and funded through Health Canada. The project is the first of its kind – a national health survey performed totally under the jurisdiction of First Nations.

Through 2002 and 2003, nine Yukon First Nation communities volunteered to participate in the study, and have been involved in every step of the survey since it began in the Yukon.

The second wave of the Regional Health Survey began in 2007, and CYFN hopes to have all 14 Yukon First Nations participate.

At the end of the survey, ownership of the research process will return to the communities and First Nations values and interpretation will be incorporated into the research and design.

The data collected in the survey will be used by CYFN's Health and Social Development Commission and the communities that participated in the survey, for health planning and program development at all levels: local, regional, and national. The findings can also be used as a tool in each community to assess and monitor ongoing health status.

**For more information contact:** The Health and Social Development Department, CYFN, (867) 393-9213.

2008-05888/

# Health Initiatives at the Council of Yukon First Nations

The Council of Yukon First Nation's Health and Social Development Department actively works to improve the health and well-being of Yukon First Nations people. Sometimes acting as a coordinator or liaison, sometimes as an advocate – always busy and involved, the department addresses issues of a national, regional or local nature. Where appropriate, it assists Yukon First Nation communities implement and evaluate the delivery of their health and social programs. The department also acts as the secretariat for the Health and Social Development Commission.

The Health and Social Development Commission is a committee of community health and social services directors and Elders. It comes together every two months to discuss major health issues and regional/national initiatives.

The Health and Social Development Department is undertaking a number of exciting initiatives: it is continuing its involvement in the regional longitudinal health survey (see story below); it has established a working group to assess the feasibility of a Yukon First Nations' Health and Wellness Centre; and it is also carrying on its involvement with the national Aboriginal Health Transition Fund to improve integration activities for First Nation citizens in our health care system, to name but a few of its current activities.

**For further information contact:** the Health and Social Development Department at (867) 393-9213.

Health Commissioners en route to meetings at Moosehide (June 2007)

# Regional Longitudinal Health Study

Ownership, control, access and possession are the principles that underlie the Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, a project run by the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) and funded through Health Canada. The project is the first of its kind – a national health survey performed totally under the jurisdiction of First Nations.

Through 2002 and 2003, nine Yukon First Nation communities volunteered to participate in the study, and have been involved in every step of the survey since it began in the Yukon.

The second wave of the Regional Health Survey began in 2007, and CYFN hopes to have all 14 Yukon First Nations participate.

At the end of the survey, ownership of the research process will return to the communities and First Nations values and interpretation will be incorporated into the research and design.

The data collected in the survey will be used by CYFN's Health and Social Development Commission and the communities that participated in the survey, for health planning and program development at all levels: local, regional, and national. The findings can also be used as a tool in each community to assess and monitor ongoing health status.

**For more information contact:** The Health and Social Development Department, CYFN (867) 393-9213.

Regional Health Survey National team at Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia (August 2007). Helen Stapper's (sixth from left wearing a blue top) is one of the two Yukon representatives on the team. Amanda Mudry (absent from photo) is the other representative.

## TRAINING POLICY COMMITTEE

The Training Policy Committee (TPC) works to assist First Nations to reach their training goals, disburses funds for training Yukon First Nation beneficiaries and is accountable for monitoring and evaluating the value of that training. TPC administers the Yukon Indian People Training Trust Fund negotiated under Chapter 28 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

The committee comprises five members: three represent the Council of Yukon First Nations, one represents the Government of Yukon and one represents the Government of Canada.

The TPC mandate can be found in Chapter 28 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

If you have any questions, or require forms or assistance with applying for funding, the TPC office staff would be happy to help you. Please call the office at (867) 668-7817, or stop by at Suite 21 – 3078 Fourth Avenue (corner of 4th & Hanson St.) in Whitehorse.

# Networking to Promote Community Health

The phones are ringing off the hook at the Arctic Health Research Network-Yukon (AHRN-YT) office in Horwood's Mall in Whitehorse. As they take turns answering calls, Jody Walker and Norma Kassi, co-directors of the AHRN-YT, take a moment to explain the goals of the non-profit society, which was established in February 2007.

"There is a gap between communities with pressing health issues that research could help improve, and researchers in the South who have expertise and training that could contribute to improving the situation," says Walker. "What is challenging is to create these connections. Many communities lack the capacity to take part meaningfully in community-based research. The ARHN-YT has a focus on regional capacity-building to facilitate the development of community-based research," she continues.

In community-driven research, communities are recognised as experts on their own health, and need to be part of every stage of the research process. For communities to be involved it is necessary to build capacity, which is why ARHN-YT is working to offer training in health research planning for community members.

Norma Kassi (left) and Jody Walker, co-directors of Arctic Health Research Network – Yukon overlooking Old Crow Flats.

"The results of research need to answer questions from communities, which is different than curiosity-driven research initiated by academics," says Walker.

In 2007, ARHN-YT co-hosted a "Spring School" where 23 Yukon First Nations health resource workers travelled to Whitehorse to learn about health promotion planning in their communities.

The course was developed and implemented at the request of, and with guidance from, the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) Health and Social Development Commission, and in partnership between CYFN, ARHN-YT, Yukon College and the University of Toronto. Funding came from a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) grant to Dr. Kue Young, and from the Yukon government Department of Health and Social Services.

"To follow up with the recommendations from the first training, ARHN-YT has partnered with CYFN, Yukon College, the University of Toronto, the University of Manitoba and others to put together a proposal to develop and deliver two training courses a year for the next three years," said Walker. "We have submitted that proposal to the International Polar Year Committee, and we anticipate finding out about funding sometime in the spring," she added.

The ARHN-YT is taking a long-term approach to training so that potential future courses can build on results from previous instruction.

After each training session, participants will take the knowledge they have gathered and use it in ways that make sense for developing health research capacity in their home communities. At the same time, the ARHN-YT will continue to facilitate the development of partnerships between interested Yukon communities and researchers from outside the Yukon.

**Arctic Health Research Network - Yukon**

The Whitehorse office of the Arctic Health Research Network is one of three across the North, and will help to coordinate information and community research efforts with the AHRN offices in NWT and Nunavut.

The ARHN will also promote best practices in relation to community-based research, for instance, respecting local research protocols and upholding the principles of ownership, control, access and possession. It will act as a link between health and wellness research activities, and seek opportunities for educational and funding partnerships in health research in the North with a focus on Aboriginal health.

**For further information contact:** the Arctic Health Research Network-Yukon at (867) 668-3393. •

# Women Connecting for Wellness

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon governments, together with the Dawson City women's group, are cooperating to hold a wellness retreat for Yukon women this spring.

The workshop will be held on traditional Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in land south of Dawson on the Dempster Highway.

Jennifer Nunan, a pre-treatment and aftercare support worker with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, says the retreat will lessen social isolation among higher-risk Yukon women by connecting them with other women who share common experiences. The retreat will also give them information on issues that impact their lives.

"The wellness of Yukon women is a cornerstone for the health of our children, families and communities," Nunan said. "Research tells us that healthy relationships are central to a woman's well-being, yet so many Yukon women live in isolation and are missing those connections which are so important to good health."

The retreat will build connections for women who face adversity and who work hard to maintain their sobriety and their self-esteem.

"During the retreat we will be drawing on the expertise of local people, and people from around the Yukon, to present workshops on topics such as healthy relationships, assertive communication, substance abuse, violence, parenting skills, nutrition, physical fitness and body image," Nunan said.

Mo Caley-Verdonk, a community Victim Services Worker based in Dawson, says some of the women who will participate in the retreat have experienced abuse in their relationships and are struggling with addictions along with learning new and different ways to live healthier lives.

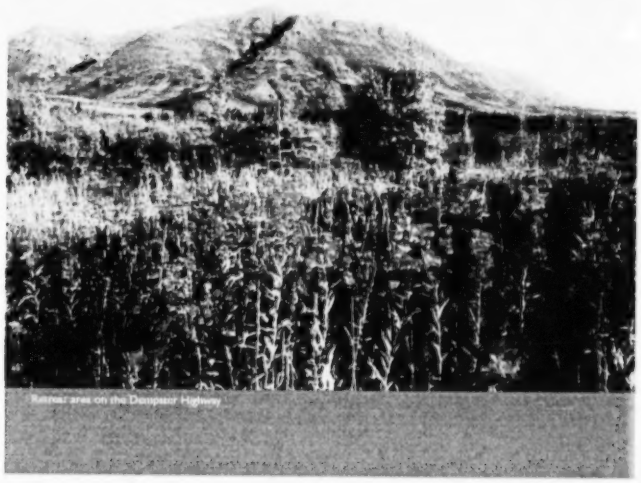
"This project is seen as a terrific opportunity to reinforce the positive attributes they possess while building their capacity to make healthier choices," Caley-Verdonk said.

The Dawson City women's group is taking the lead on developing programming for the workshop.

Nunan said the retreat also presents an opportunity for community development. "For example, local women will be building their investment in women's health and well-being as they take the lead in hosting the retreat and organising activities for the three days," she said.

The wellness retreat is funded in part by a contribution from the Yukon government's Community Development Fund. The wellness retreat is planned for May 19 – 23, 2008.

**For more information:** Please contact the Government of Yukon at (867) 667-5406. •



Retreat area on the Dempster Highway.

"The wellness of Yukon women is a cornerstone for the health of our children, families and communities. Research tells us that healthy relationships are central to a woman's well-being yet so many Yukon women live in isolation and are missing those connections which are so important to good health."

JENNIFER NUNAN, PRE-TREATMENT AND AFTERCARE SUPPORT WORKER WITH THE TR'ONDËK HWËCH'IN

# Vuntut Gwitchin Student Receives Funding for Medical School

McMaster University medical student Alisa Kelly says she has always been interested in health and healing, but it wasn't until she had worked some less-than-fulfilling jobs, and met a few doctors, that she finally decided she would make the attempt to pursue the field of medicine.

Kelly, who lived in Elsa and Mayo until she was eight years old, is a member of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. She earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Victoria. Now, she is studying medicine with help from the Yukon's Medical Education Bursary, one of a larger package of health education bursaries that the Yukon government uses to attract and retain health care workers.

"I had some friends who were in medical school and through conversations with them I realised this was something that I wanted to pursue," Kelly said. "The more doctors that I met, the more I understood the wide range of work a physician does."

Kelly says there are a number of aspects of medicine that attracted her to the profession, and her positive experience in her medical studies has sparked her interest in encouraging others to pursue a similar path.

"You get the amazing privilege of being involved in peoples' lives; you can continue to learn throughout your career and pursue research if you want. You work intimately within the community that you choose to practice in and you feel good about contributing to peoples' lives," Kelly said.

"The Yukon health education bursary has been a big help for me in covering the cost of tuition," Kelly said. "It's allowing me to concentrate on studying and learning without having to be constantly worried about how I was going to cover my living and studying costs while I'm in medical school."

This Yukon-bred doctor-in-training says she would love to come back to the Yukon to work and hopefully contribute to First Nations communities in whatever capacity she can.

**For more information contact:** Health and Social Services at (867) 667-5695.

# Health Programs Transferred to Self-Governing First Nations

Yukon First Nation self-government agreements give First Nations power to negotiate the transfer of programs and services from the governments of Yukon or Canada in areas where they have jurisdiction, such as the provision of health care to their citizens.

The process to transfer programs and services is outlined in section 17 of each Yukon First Nation's self-government agreement. The process results in what is called a programs and services transfer agreement, or PSTA.

Once a Yukon self-governing First Nation assumes the responsibility for a federal or territorial government program it has full and complete authority to manage, administer, design, deliver and set its priorities for the program according to its citizens' needs.

Since Yukon self-government agreements came into effect, Canada has been transferring programs and services to Yukon self-governing First Nations. In the area of health, the following programs have been transferred:

| Year of Transfer | First Nation | Programs |
|---|---|---|
| 1999 | Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation<br>First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun<br>Champagne and Aishihik First Nations<br>Teslin Tlingit Council<br>Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in<br>Selkirk First Nation<br>Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation | Health Services, Addiction Services; Brighter Futures; Building Healthy Communities; Pre-natal Care; Health Careers; Health Liaison/ Health Management Support |
| 2003 | Kluane First Nation | Same programs as above |
| 2005 | Carcross/Tagish First Nation<br>Kwanlin Dun First Nation | Same programs as above<br>Same programs as above and Nursing Services |
| 2007 | Teslin Tlingit Council<br>Carcross/Tagish First Nation<br>Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in<br>Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation<br>Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation<br>Kluane First Nation<br>Selkirk First Nation<br>Champagne and Aishihik First Nations* | Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative<br>Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)<br>HIV/AIDS; National Aboriginal Youth Suicide Prevention Program; Maternal, and Child Health; Home and Community Care* |

*except Kluane First Nation

**For more information contact:** Health Canada at (867) 393-6905

Alisa Kelly with students from Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, Old Crow (November 2007)

Porcupine River, Old Crow

**Visions North**

TALKING ABOUT LAND CLAIMS
Spring/Summer 2008 – Yukon Region

Published under the authority of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Ottawa, 2008

www.ainc-inac.gc.ca
1-800-567-9604
TTY only 1-866-553-0554

QS-Y153-100-EE-A1

ISSN 1496-9070

© Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2008

For information or to share your feedback:

**INAC – Communications**
phone: (867) 667-3888, http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca

**CYFN – Communications**
phone: (867) 393-9226, http://www.cyfn.ca

**Government of Yukon – Communications**
phone: (867) 667-8968, http://www.gov.yk.ca

This newsletter was produced through the efforts of many. A special thanks to the First Nation people and public service employees who provided information for the articles in this newsletter.

**Contributors:** Meagan Perry, Amanda Mudry, Beth Thenault, Roberta Hartman, Justin Ferbey, Shel Gaupe, Bob Vandyken, Alisa Kelly, Paul Doehle, Dr. Laurie Chan, Pam Tobin, Jennifer Lee, Sonia Weeche, Rod Jacob, Peter Lennie, and Marie-Louise Boylan

**Photographs courtesy of:** Government of Yukon, OldCrow.ca, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Justin Ferbey, Amanda Mudry, Jody Walker and Meagan Perry

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : *Visions du Nord*

visions north · CYFN · Yukon Government · Indian and Northern Affairs Canada · Canada